1: Hoebel E-5 (1933) 1940 NO6 Comanche NO6

ABNORMAL CONDUCT

On a less-than-legal level there are forms of social conduct which are definitely in violation of social norms and yet not viewed in the eyes of a people as behavior that calls for explicit sanctions. Such acts, though disapproved, society is willing to leave to the implicit sanctions of public opinion and the desire of the individual to stand well. The off-the-norm behavior described in this section is of this order.

ILLEGITIMACY

Comanche attitudes towards illegitimacy show no vindictiveness, though the feeling prevailed that every child should have a recognized father. Illegitimacy was declared by all informants to have been rare. Premarital sex relations were common enough, and abortion was not unusual, but in case of childbirth it is asserted that the father married the mother willingly. If the father did not come forth voluntarily and his identity was known, the parents of the girl are said to have gone to him with friendly talk to persuade him to marry the daughter. In cases of doubt (multiple possibilities), informants say paternity was determined on the basis of physical resemblance between child and supposed father: or if the child was old enough, it was determined by whom the child chose as its father. It is stated that if the father was not known, the girl was not usually married to another for a long time after the birth of her child, for the father could come and claim his child at any time. The problem-set was not to punish the mother, but to properly provide for the child.

That's It gave a history which is typical of the Comanche attitudes.

Case 33. Illegitimacy
Informant: That's It

"An unmarried woman had a child. She said she would never be able to take care of that child, so she thought she would get rid of it. Accordingly, she took it to a grove and there washed it up and laid it on a bed of sage leaves. Pretty soon a young man came out to tend horses. He found the little baby lying there. He looked at it and picked it up and wrapped it in his blanket. He turned back home with it. Just as he stepped through the door of his tipi the baby cried. The brave's mother, who was there, looked up, 'Did I hear a baby?'

" 'Yes,' said the youth, 'here's my son.'

" 'What a burden!' the mother cried.

"But her son insisted on keeping it, so they took the child to a wet nurse. They gave her presents in payment for feeding the baby. Later on they bought corn meal from the Mexicans to feed it. When the boy was three years old, his father told his mother and father that he wanted to go on the war-path. He was gone for a year.

1: Hoebel E-5 (1933) 1940 NO6 Comanche NO6

RAPE

Rape was an act beyond the pale of normal conduct. It, too, was of infrequent occurrence and not part of the general pattern. Sex relations were so free that there seems to have been little cause for rape. 839

Case 35. Rape: Blow it Away
Informant: Holding Her Sunshade

"Blow It Away was a chronic offender. He was not favored by the women and was generally avoided by them. He made up for this by attempting surreptitious night unions with women in their tipis. He would sneak in and try to arouse them to desire. He never had much success. Then, too, he would attempt to rape such women as he found alone away from the camp. These attacks he would make in the daytime and in these he was usually successful. No one ever caught him attacking a married woman, so he was never called to account by a husband. But one night he tried his night-stealing on a large married woman and she broke him. 684

"The woman awoke to find Blow It Away feeling her. She struggled with him; then she got him down. Holding him to the ground, she ripped his breech clout from his loins and grabbed his penis. She was starting to drag him from the tipi when her son awoke and saw them. Her boy begged her not to do that to the man, but the mother was going to teach that nuisance a lesson. Holding him as she had him, she dragged Blow It Away through the door out into the open spaces between the tipis where all the people could see him.

"This was the first time anyone took action against him. It was the last time he tried to force himself on a woman."

This is shaming par excellence, plus a very painful conditioning.

Sleep-crawling by either boy or girl was legitimate if the recipient did not object to quiet night visits. Thus, it was out of the category of abnormal conduct. 836●

THEFT

Theft was so unusual that no provision was made for it in the legal scheme. Consequently it must fall into the vague class of unapproved abnormal acts which were outside the scope of law. One informant after another avowed that it never happened within the tribe. No clear cut cases of theft under aboriginal conditions were recorded. 685

GRAVE ROBBERY

In recent years the Comanches have been considerably annoyed by ghouls. The ancient custom of burying a person's individual belongings with him and of throwing articles of value into the grave with the body persists today. Predatory whites have been given to exhuming bodies to strip them of whatever valuables might be found. The grave of the son of a certain rich

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857 spent in gang play. When a new camp was set up, they set out to find a good water hole in the creek where they could play all day. Following and baiting small birds and large insects fascinated them. [411 224] Hummingbirds were shot with headless arrows having a vertically split foreshaft in which to catch the birds. Boys would spend all day chasing one bird, according to Skinny and Wrinkled, in a kind of concentration that boded well for the future hunter and tracker of men and beasts. Bull bats were shot with arrows having horizontally split foreshafts. Grasshoppers were shot with hummingbird arrows, and their hind legs were eaten for lunch.

The boys had great fun by tying two grasshoppers together with a short thread and then crowding about to watch them "wrestle." They would jump and jerk each other up short. The one that first fell on its back was the loser. They liked to catch "shit rollers," tie a piece of straw to a leg, and watch them fly, running fleetly after them as they followed their courses. They would stick a small straw up the anus of a horsefly and turn the insect loose—which perhaps showed how they felt about horseflies.

Small boys, who had no real arrows, made them of reed shafts with grasshopper legs for points and a ballast daub of mud stuck two inches from the point. They killed night hawks with slings and amused themselves playing with whirrers—two strings attached to a bone and pulled taut to make a whirring noise.

Although boys were by themselves most of the time, the younger ones now and then joined the little girls to play camp. On the sand by the creek they built small windbreaks and arbors. A play group leader was made "chief," and each boy chose a wife or wives. They all swam in the creek, gathered in ponies with the girls, and rode together. Some time was spent by the boys in hunting squirrels to bring into camp for their "wives" to cook, while the girls gathered berries, edible roots, and the eggs of turkeys, ducks, quail, and prairie chickens. All this swag made for good make-believe feasts.

[836] The more precocious dallied in sexual experimentation. "One day we played at being married. I did my best to make a baby with my wife," said Post Oak Jim.

857 526 When younger boys and girls played together (but not when they were playing camp), there were several forms of joint games.

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
NO6 Comanche NO6

In fact, girls were often married off to middle-aged men who could give a good bride-price. The average age at marriage for girls is said to have been sixteen, while for boys it was twenty-five to thirty.

Although youngsters were not subject to moral censure for sexual activity, it was not encouraged. Boys, during the period of their pre-adolescent gang life, ignored the girls to a great degree. At adolescence, when they got their own tipis, they became positively bashful. It was proper for girls and women to make sexual advances, but not for a well-mannered boy. "Boys seemed to stay pretty much to their tipis," said Post Oak Jim. "It was the girl's place to come to them." Bolder, unmarried older girls might crawl in a boy's tipi at night to initiate him in lovemaking. In the dark these girls commonly kept their identity anonymous, for it would not help their reputations to be known.

The Comanche pattern of social conduct, in theory, prohibited young couples from being seen together. In response to the query of what would have happened if they had been found together, informants replied, "It would have been too bad." In practice, however, they did find opportunity to be in each other's company. More romances probably began where the girls went for water and wood than any other place. When a young lover became fond of a girl, he waited near where she might pass. When she approached, he stepped toward her, watching for an encouraging sign that his attentions might be welcome. If she was not interested, the girl made the fact known through her actions, and he went away much mortified. If the girl were favorably inclined, they agreed by a sign, mutual understanding, or orally on a time and a meeting place. If no older people were near, they might spend a while together. Again, they might agree to meet after dark. Sometimes a girl allowed a boy to come to her tipi. The more bashful boys lay outside, whispering to the girls inside, but they might be bold enough to crawl under the tipi and lie with them. More often, however, the girl crawled out and went a short distance away with her suitor. Supposedly no one else knew, but informants felt that certainly the girl's mother must at times have been aware of what was taking place. Most courting was done when the girl slipped out of the tipi and met the boy at night.[12]

[12] Informants: Medicine Woman; See How Deep the Water Is. Statements by Marcy, Dodge, Parker, and others are substantially in agreement.